FANDOM TEAM-UP

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COMIC FANDOM BULLETIN AND BEMUSING MAGAZINE

JANUARY

10p

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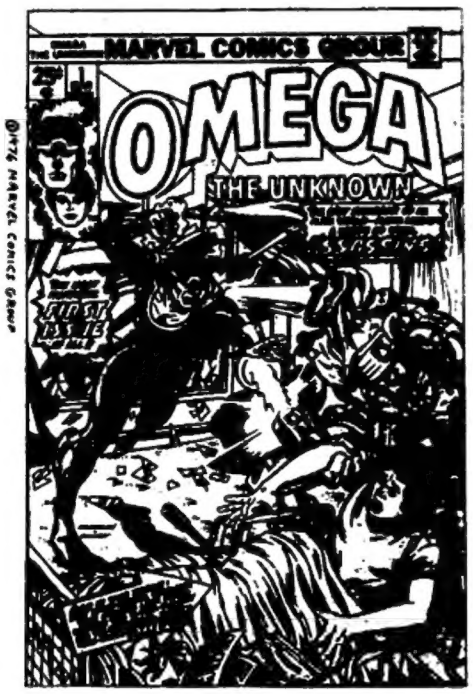
ALL THE VERY LATEST NEWS, REVIEWS AND COMMENT



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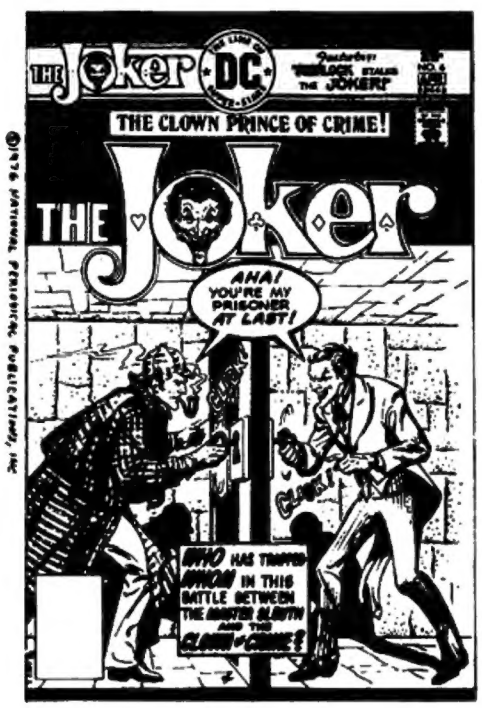
THE Joker
DC
THE CLOWN PRINCE OF CRIME!
THE Joker
AHA! YOU'RE MY PRISONER AT LAST!
WHO HAS TRAPPED WHOM IN THIS BATTLE BETWEEN THE MASTER MAGICIAN AND THE CLOWN OF CRIME?

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JANUARY 1976

Rob Barrow - editors - Martin Lock
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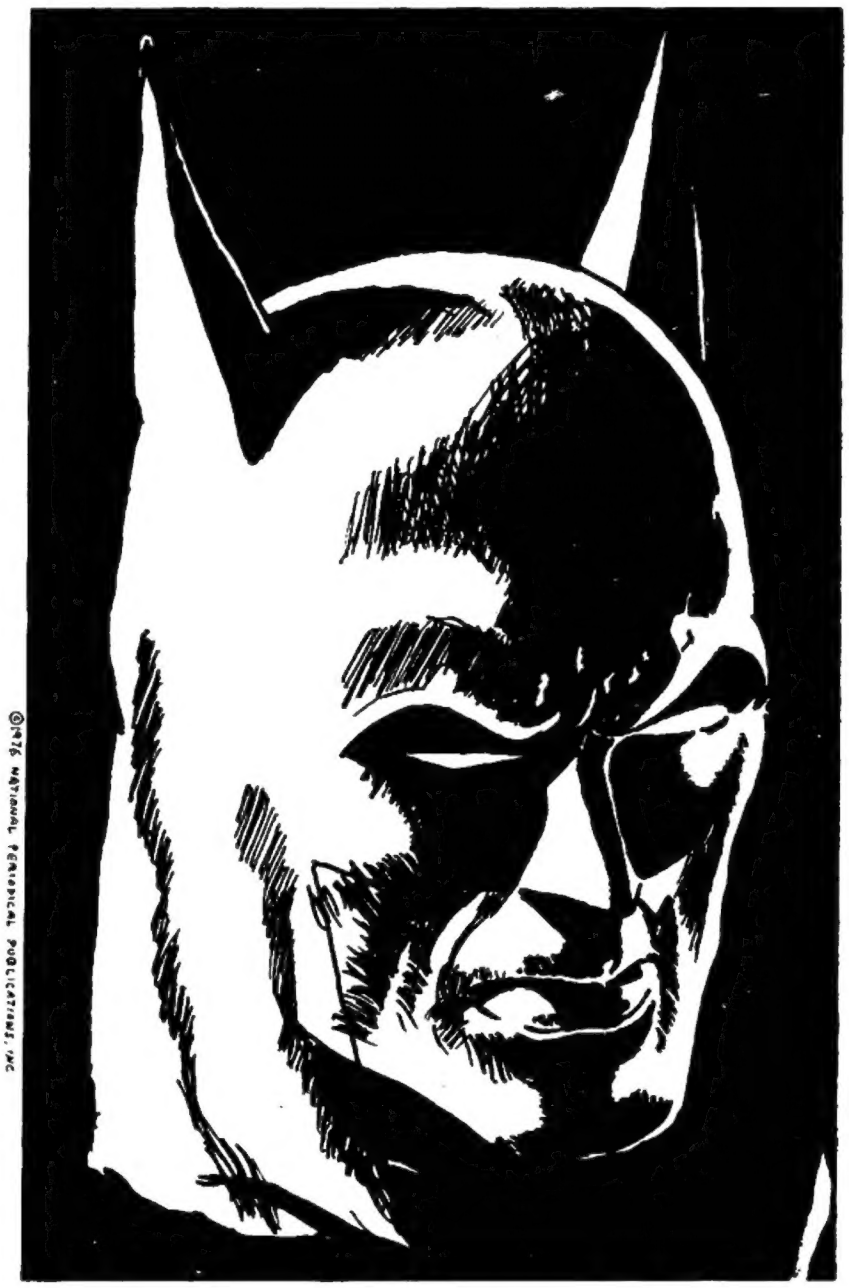

ART CREDITS
Chris Ash: 4.
Al Walker: 9.
Mercy Van Vlack: 1,2,6,7,11(inks),12,15,17,18.
Leslie Stannage: 2.
Greg Chown: 11(pencils),13.
Superswipe: 1,13,20.

BEMUSINGS

If you're a subscriber to Rob Barrow's COMIC FANDOM BULLETIN, and this magazine has dropped onto your mat one day early in January, then this is an issue of CFB--the fourth, as far as I can remember. Rob was going to take up half this page with his very own editorial, but he sent word that he didn't want to delay this issue -- he has got a word for his subscribers on page 19, though. Jonn Hay volunteered to write a substitute editorial for Rob--but that would be adding insult to injury for all the long-suffering CFB subscribers, and, besides, Leslie Stannage draws better than they do!

Anyway, if you buy this fanzine at a Mart or in a shop, it's Bemusing ≠8. This joint effort means that the promised shift of emphasis from news to articles is delayed a little; however, despite giving four pages (6,7,18 & 19) to CFB material, we've just managed to squeeze in the promised short article on Conan.

Just to prove how much Bem likes your letters, we've published 3 whole pages of them this time; if enough people write, this should be a regular feature. One part of Bem in particular I'd like your comments on--Captain Nuts, the Peanuts-type strip written by Mark Bryant, pencilled by his friend Malcolm Lomax, and inked by Superswipe. Should it continue in Bem? I hope so...

I trust that everyone's as pleased as I am that Mercy Van Vlack is now a major contributor to Bem--and I'd like to join her, Dr Strange, and all Bem contributors in wishing all our readers an enjoyable 1976! -Martin Lock

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NEWS

Marvel's new projects include THE PRISONER as a colour comic drawn by Gene Colan, NOVA (a straight-forward super-hero, a teenager named Richard Rider who is given super-strength and flight, and other powers developing--he lives with his family on Long Island), written by Marv Wolfman and pencilled by John Buscema, RETURN OF THE GODS (the "metaphorical" Kirby continuation of the Fourth World series), and MS. MARVEL, a revamped version of the X-Men's Marvel Girl, written by Mary Skrenes and Steve Gerber. Also planned is a new series of tales featuring the original Black Knight, edited by Roy Thomas and plotted and drawn by Big John Buscema, while Roy Thomas is taking over POWER MAN, and with Gil Kane hopes to feature MOWGLI (from Rudyard Kipling's "Jungle Book") in two issues of Marvel Premiere.

It is confirmed that Marvel will be issuing one-shot 50-cent Giant-Size Annuals, with all new material, during 1976. Characters involved are AVENGERS (by Englehart or Thomas and Sal Buscema or Perez!), CAPTAIN AMERICA (by Kirby), DAREDEVIL (Wolfman/Colan), DEFENDERS (Gerber & Sal B), DR STRANGE (Englehart/Colan), FANTASTIC FOUR (Thomas/John B), IRON MAN (Gerber/Trimpe, guesting Man-Thing), SPIDER-MAN & X-MEN (Marvel Team-Up by Mantlo/Sal B), THING & THE LIBERTY LEGION (Marvel Two-In-One by Thomas/John B), MASTER OF KUNG FU (Moench/Pollard), POWER MAN (Thomas/DeZuniga), THOR (Englehart/John B), CONAN (Thomas/Alcazar, adapting "Phoenix On The Sword"), HULK (Wein/Sal B or Kirby), and also of course SPIDER-MAN (Wein/Kane).

Tigra and Scarecrow will be guesting in TWO-IN-ONE; from MARVEL CHILLERS #6 (and #4) Frank Robbins will be Tigra's regular artist.

The first new GL/GA issue (of 3) has now been finished, and should be scheduled soon--art by Grell, script by O'Neil. Most of the new books will run for only 3 issues, pending the sales reports, but BLACKHAWK has 6 to make good in.

The new back-up strip in ACTION is to star Superman's supporting characters, such as Roy Raymond, Morgan Edge, and Lola Barnett—and in DETECTIVE, Hawkman and Elongated Man give way to Man-Bat and Tim Trench, Private Eye for a few months. Lee Elias, back in America after his sojourn in England, will pencil a WORLDS FINEST--that magazine will soon see the return of the (-echh-) Super Sons.

"THE DC SUPER-STAR SOCIETY", a fan club with separate chapters for each of the DC stars, is in preparation--watch for the house ads soon.

Joe Kubert, although being stripped of most of his editorial duties, will continue on OUR ARMY AT WAR and THE BIBLE, plus new projects.

"Tales of the Great Disaster" will be a new back-up strip for KAMANDI, by Conway & Marcos.

SUPERMAN #300 should have a painted cover by Adams, with Curt Swan art after arrangements for (a) Infantino, and (b) Adams to draw the "Superman 2001" story hadn't worked -- fancy trying to get Neal Adams to meet a deadline!

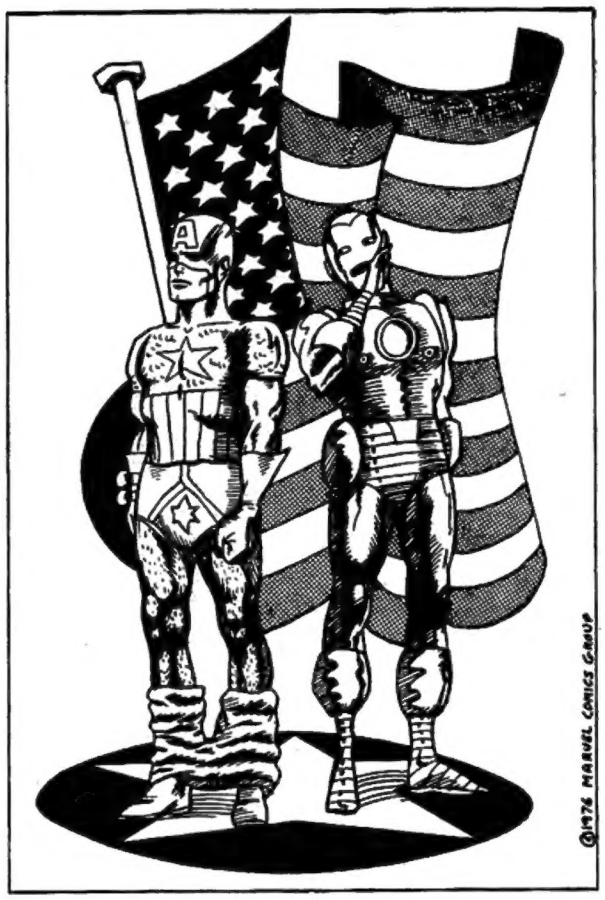
A new "The New, Original Wonder Woman" pilot TV movie has been aired, to glowing reviews.

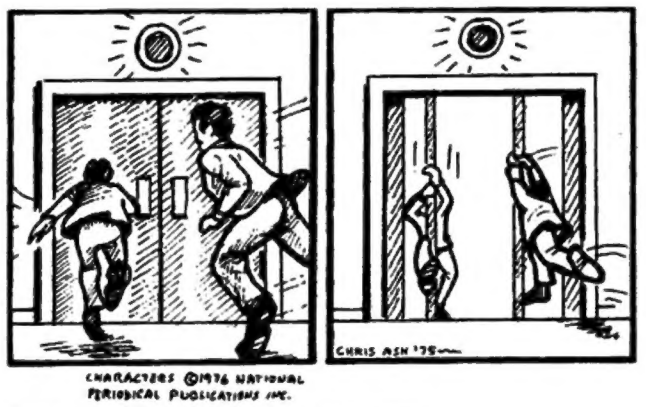
Gold Key final issues: BROTHERS OF THE SPEAR #17 (Gaylord DuBois/Dan Spiegle), DARK SHADOWS #35 (Joe Certa), and MIGHTY SAMSON #31 (Arnold Drake/Jose Delbo). At Charlton, EMERGENCY #3 (b&w) and SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN #3 (b&w) both have Adams covers. Cuti & Staton have stopped doing the 25-cent SPACE: 1999 comic.

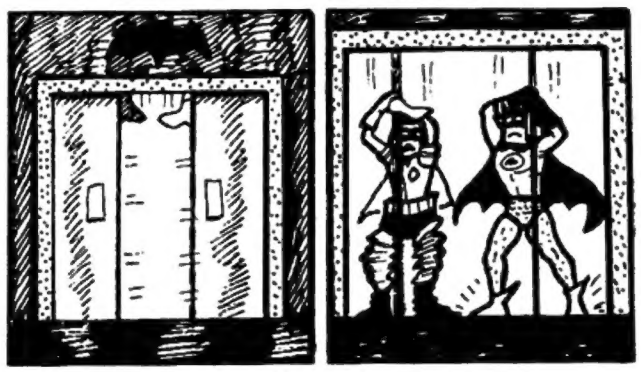
...more news on pages 17 & 19

"THE MART" by Hunter Makepeace Tremayne

At noon I'm there, I declare.
  The steady flow of dealers/stealers
(Money, honey -- the name of the game)
  And through the doors, to collective applause,
See all those tables -- like comicfan fables
  Here, there, and everywhere
Everywhere I look my heart begins to cook
  Man-Things, Fan-Things, Captain Everythings,
Super-heroes, one-shot zeroes, in myriadic majesty
  Rich Burton is there, looking square but sharp,
CM News publisher -- and looking the part.
  And the atmosphere's electric,
Everything's so hectic,
  And chat, chat, chat,
(Even to the prat
  Who's never heard of E-Man--there ought to be a ban!)
TBS, Barrow, and Emlock are here,
  Nipping out for an occasional beer.
But please shed a tear for the solo seller;
  He cannot leave his table, poor fella!
And an auction is held,
  And that moment's spelled
In terms of bemused offers
  And indignant scoffers,
"Such a price"
  "But oh, how nice!"
A plethora of people
  But only the tip of a steeple
For most left long ago.
  And I shall probably come again--
are we all insane?
  But if I don't escape from reality, perhaps
I might have a relapse,
  And here we have not the gun to the head
But fantasy instead
  And in this world of nine to five
We need Conan, et al
  To survive the ride;
So if you're out in the cold,
  With hunger for fun in your soul,
    STEP INSIDE...!







CAPTAIN NUTS by B.L. Schwipe

REG USPATOFF

It's a costly business, collecting comics--and I'm not just talking about back issues! I suppose I'll be buying that Superman/Spider-Man team-up in a week or two; assuming I get my copy from a store, and not an over-pricing dealer, that will set me back two crinkly new dollars. Two dollars for a comic! Inflation, I guess...it hits everything, doesn't it?

But, do you remember the fall of 1971? Both DC and Marvel were experimenting with a new price/page-count format--52 pages for 25cents. DC gave us a standard comic-book length of new material, which in those dead days was around 23 pages, plus reprints--Marvel, for just one glorious month, gave us 35 pages of new story in just about every book. Anyway, Marvel could not keep to the format, and DC were unable to hold to it alone--it was back to 36-page books with smaller stories, and smaller...both DC & Marvel are now down to a mere 17 pages. And here's a bit of brand-new news, from one of the top creative men at Marvel -- DC are going over to the Marvel practise of not numbering the pages of story, when they dip to 17 pages and rise to 30 cents. Can you blame them for being ashamed of the value?

The 52-pagers are returning in a month or so --but this time at 50 cents! Otherwise, the situation's much as before, except that the 25 cent and 30 cent books will continue. Marvel's Giant-Sizers return as all-new one-shots for every monthly book except Marvel Tales and the ailing Tomb of Dracula, and DC's Giants go to 52 pages too, with 17 pages of new stuff and around the same quantity of reprint -- except for the regularly giant-sized PLOP! which uses a lot of cheap cartoon material. Let's hope the 50-centers, even with this page-cut, live long and prosper; most of Marvel's pros would love to have over 30 pages of story to fill instead of trying to cram everything into 17 measly pages!

The Superman/Spider-Man book, by the way, has really fine art; Andru, Giordano, and his background man (he must be an architecture buff!) have excelled themselves -- I wish the same could be said of National's half of the deal, the script. Gerry Conway's strength has never been plot, or research--basically, he's a dialogue man. Nobody at DC has authority to correct the shortcomings and excesses (Supes hits Spidey so hard he's sent six times around the world?--that's been got rid of!), so it's been left to Marvel to point out little details like Mary Jane is not known to be connected with Spider-Man in the way Lois is with Supes, Kandor's gravity would crush an unprotected Spidey, Superman's X-ray vision can't melt lead...

The book starts with separate stories of 16 or so pages each featuring the two stars, and then there's a feature on their origins, then the two supporting casts meet at a newspaper-people's convention, then Luthor and Doc Ock have a meeting--it's not until around page 60 that Superman and Spider-Man finally meet for the obligatory fight, before uniting to defeat the menace of Lex Luthor's latest satellite!

As I said, the art's fine--but the story is only worth around 17 pages! -RU

THE HIGHGATE SIX

On a recent Tuesday evening, at the Highgate flat of Ruan Lanihorne, a group of London fans got together to discuss various fannish topics for us. Besides our host, present were Henry Sandwich, who tries to cover the underground comics scene for CMN and CFB; Ed Sallis, who writes fan news and reviews for CFB, Bemusing, CMN, and other zines; Jonn Hay, the part-time layabout; and his neighbour, Martin Lock. And let us not forget a friend of Ruan's, Diana Richmond, who, besides adding a few comments now and then, took charge of the microphone of Martin's cassette recorder, and made sure that it was pointing at whoever was speaking.

After general talk about the dampness of the day and the frequency of underground trains, Ruan brought the gathering to order.

RL All right, it's time to start taping, so sit down, everybody. It's a pity Rob Barrow couldn't get here tonight, as this meeting was his idea, but we all know how busy he is with his work at TV Cartoons, advising World Distributors, and comics selling.

HS Yes, he's probably still recovering from the November Comic Mart. And that reminds me --Ruan, I didn't see you there.

RL I didn't get there until after four, in the end. I suppose all the good stuff had gone well before that.

ML Well before one o'clock, unless it was very much over-priced.

ES Yes, you were among the first people there, weren't you, Martin?

ML Nick Landau was already getting the tables set up, with a few people helping--the only dealer I recognised was Brian Jepson, he's always about the first to get set up, and he gets a cluster of people looking through his boxes straight away.

ES Other dealers?

ML Well, in theory--mainly junior helpers.

JH That Brian Jepson's one of the high-price people, isn't he?

ML Not more than a number of others--I've got a lot of stuff off his tables, and I'm not complaining. He never over-charged for new imports, when some people were charging up to double the penny-to-the-cent price for Conans and giant-sizers.

RL So he's not a rip-off dealer, I'd say. But we do get a number of them at Comic Marts, don't we?

HS I've noticed, on various tables, £2.00 for Sandman #1, the latest one-dollar DC reprint at £1.75, Swamp Thing #10 not much cheaper, a Marvel Premiere Dr Strange at £4.00, even recent 9p Marvels like Inhumans #1 at 50p--I'm glad I don't collect such stuff!

ES I think that pricing is settling down just a bit lately, though...

JH Still enough criminal prices to keep Comics Unlimited's "Rip-Off of the Month" busy for years, though!

ES Yes, but, when you see these high prices on comics on the wall, you must realise that if there wasn't a demand, they wouldn't bother. They only charge what they're fairly sure they can get, you can't blame someone for charging what the market will bear.

DR It's daylight robbery, up to a couple of pounds for a comic that was available for eight pence last autumn!

ES Well, you always get the odd con-man...

ML No, you can't say that--

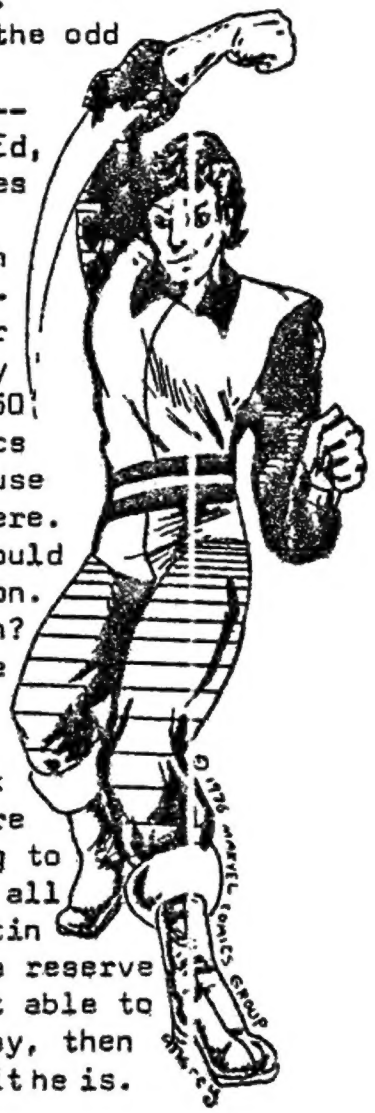
RL Slow down, everybody. Ed, do you pay rip-off prices when you need a comic?

ES I paid a pound for Conan 36, the first of the non-distributed issues, for a friend -- he was fairly happy. I parted with £3.50 for the Warren "Comics International" #1, because it's so very rare over here.

HS I wonder how much it would have fetched in an auction.

RL What do you think, Martin? You've done some of the auctioning at marts.

ML Don't remind me! Dez Skinn makes it all look so easy, but when you're standing up there, trying to get an audience who are all busy consulting the Austin Price Guide to reach a reserve price the dealer wasn't able to sell the comic at all day, then you realise how good at it he is.



But I doubt if a Comics International would reach £3.50 in auction, though it's worth it easily--there are too few Warren completists.

JH Now, that's something to talk about, the Alan Austin Price Guide. Get ready to delete a few expletives, Diana!

DR You're a born trouble-maker.

ES But it's a useful book, I've found.

ML It's been selling well, and I think it has had some effect on many people's prices.

HS Yes, it'll probably go into a new edition every year or so, with prices steadily going up all the time.

JH But some people, Bram Stokes for example, just see it as a joke.

ES Okay, the prices are lower than some we're used to, because Alan wants to keep prices down, and that's a good idea.

ML Yes, it's a good book. It may cut down the bargains as well as the rip-offs, but that's only to be expected. But I think Rob wanted us to talk about fan apathy tonight, so--

JH Okay, comics fans are apathetic. Now let's get back to pricing, especially of the Neal Adams issues, it's much more fun!

RL Settle down, Jonn. As Alan Austin, and a number of other fanzine editors, often says in editorials, the response rate, the rate of participation, isn't too good. If a zine prints 600 copies, and you only get about 10 letters of comment and if you're lucky one offer of artwork or articles, I suppose that it must make you wonder what happens with the other 589 readers. They do read the mag, you suppose, but then just yawn, have a good scratch, and put on the TV.

ML Or do their homework, or read a comic...

HS Things would get out of control if all 600 wrote in, and sent a few illustrations of Fat Freddy's Cat and an article on Iron Man and his philosophy of life, though!

RL True, Ham, but a 10% response rate would be nice. Only Dez Skinn gets anything like that at the moment, I expect he gets more letters per issue than the Daily Mirror.

DR Are most comics fans shy, bookish people, who don't want to make contacts?

ES Perhaps a lot of us are; but, once you get past the barriers, you get some interesting conversations. Calling us "bookish" seems a bit strange, though.

DR The serious novel is dying, newspapers are declining in circulation, even genre fiction like mysteries and SF isn't as popular as a few years ago, if trends continue in America the average ammount of TV watched per day'll reach 8 whole hours within a decade...comics may become the last outpost of any sort of mass literacy, the main reason that people bother to learn to read at all.

ES Okay, Diana, point taken.

ML A participating fan is an interesting chap anyway. Perhaps, from what Diana just said, the idea of hobbies, apart from TV-watching, is dying out, and that's a shame. It's fun writing for fanzines, writing to fans here and in America, producing fanzines, reading and reviewing with the deadline doom inches away--I just wish more people would try it. I've met some nice people through Bemusing and my other enterprises; but it would be nice if there were more of them.

HS But where would fanzines be without that great silent majority who buy them?

JH Broke, that's where!

RL That sounds like a good place to stop; it's ten o'clock, and the train service gets even worse than usual at this time of night. So, good luck Martin with the transcribing and editing, and, on behalf of our sponsor, Rob Barrow of Comic Fandom Bulletin and Fantasy Domain, this is Ruan Lanihorne signing off. Thank you, Ed, Henry, Martin, Jonn, Diana--I've enjoyed this talk, and I hope it makes a readable feature for CFB, or Bemusing, or wherever. But now, it's time to return our readers to the regularly scheduled fanzine.

JH Trust Ruan to get the last word!

FAN-THINGS

A COLUMN OF FANZINE NEWS AND REVIEWS, CONDUCTED FOR BEMUSING MAGAZINE BY NIFTY NIGEL EDWARDS

As expansive Ed Sallis is vacationing over Christmas (see how reading U.S. comics effects your vocabulary?) it's up to me to write "Fan-Things" this go-round, so...

Let's begin with our rival (pause for loud hissing), COMIC MEDIA NEWS; #22 retained CMN's usual high standard, with plenty of editor Burton's remarks on his latest trip to the States. You the reader (yes, you!) probably already get the mag, and if not, why not? It costs 21p, from Richard Burton.

Another zine mining the news & reviews lode is Paul Gravett's FANDOM DIGEST; #2 is a vast improvement on the premiere issue, but work is needed to stop it from being another CMN/Bem imitation. Comparing it to the aforementioned is a bit unfair, as both are now established, and have gone through many changes--as will FD if it is to survive. At any rate, Paul is on the right track. 16½p will get you a copy, from PG

Yet another news & reviews (with rather more emphasis on the latter) zine is THE CREEPING FANZINE DISEASE, into its third issue, edited by Eric Reinders.

Behind some interesting Rafa art you'll find many reviews and a 1-12 issue rundown on the Shadow. Pages and pages of short reviews give a slight case of overkill, plus too many free plugs for zines, shops, and dealers. Again, there's a need for divergence of interests, but of course if you can't get enough of comic reviews, for 16½p this is the zine for you!

Over to THE PANELOLOGIST now; #4 has 16 big pages packed with good stuff for a mere 16½p, from George Barnett.

Contents include a front page of news (much of which is or was news), the Gripevine, well-done zine reviews, strong opinions, a sarky column by me, and lots of letters--really good value for money. (And they didn't pay me to say that...well, not all that much, anyway...)

From the same team comes LITRATRIP #1, a 12 page comic strip wonderfully handled by Tony Schofield -- it's perhaps not as professional (i.e. boring) as overground stuff, Tony makes up for it in sheer enthusiasm. Strip-zines never seem to be a success, but this one does deserve to be; at 16½p it's well worth it, and I wish it a lot of luck.

Probably the exact opposite can be said of the GLEITZMAN COMIC-BOOK 16½p, from Messers Waite & Morton.

Badly drawn and oddly written -- at least I thought so, as I didn't quite "get it", though, as one of the editors told me at the Nov Mart, it is more intended for a college crowd, and you know what they're like! It has, however, inspired Jack Straw to create his own superhero -- Superstraw?

CAULDRON OF FEAR from Paul Rose,

seems a strange zine to bring out, with the current downswing of the horror comics--or does Paul know something we don't? This first issue, at 16½p, is okay with some nice art from Paul, but #2 will have to be more cohesive to bring in more buyers.

From Mark Bilsborough,

we get CROM #2. For 20p, we have 28 pages all about savages and barbarians, such as Stalker, Pink Floyd, Wulf, and...Pink Floyd?? Quite a few other odd contents inhabit the pages like ordinary comic news and a bio of Don Heck. Now, I like him, but you name me one other! Depending on how much you like S & S, give Crom a try.

Coming on like a boot from a United fan is Manchester's own FANTASY TRADER, edited by none other than Mike Cruden. A dated but highly pleasant Oracle, an enjoyable lettercol, a creator profile of Pete Costanza (last ish it was Paul Neary, how about that for "from the sublime to the ridiculous"?), a mad cartoon, and of course ads make up issue 20--lorra nice stuff. 16½p from Mike's new address.

(Look, if you were Mike, you'd need to move around a lot!)

And last but I hope not least, how about a few words about my own mag, NAMELESS ZINE? Financial difficulties (ie- I spend too much on comics) have prevented me bringing #4 out sooner, but nearly all the material is there. Articles like "Nightmaster, Wrightson's Conan", "1984 is Alive and Well and Living at Marvel", "Conan is a Load of Crap", plus art, letters, and lots of other stuff. "The Rip-Off Price Guide" is the back-up spoof, by Pete April. As the zine is going litho, there may well be a lot of changes, but I'm holding the price at 20p through the post if you want to order now. I hope to keep the page count high, improve the quality, and have it ready for the next Mart; and I can't say fairer than that. Good-bem!

EMLOCK TALE-ENDERS

OMEGA THE UNKNOWN ≠1 has to be the best of the March Marvels to start with; in 18 pages, conceived and written by Steve Gerber & Mary Skrenes, and drawn by Jim Mooney. I can't say I understand it all, but it's certainly a good premiere. We first meet Omega himself, "last of his superior breed", fleeing across some desolate future landscape. He's caught...and shot...he screams...

James-Michael Starling screams, and wakes--from the other bedroom, his parents come to comfort him. But the nightmare is only just beginning. The crash--the hospital--and then Omega and his metal adversary burst into his room...it's all nice work by writing duo, and Jim Mooney. Just don't listen to the voices, James-Michael--especially if they tell you not to buy this issue!

Well, if that's a Tale-Ender, how long would a full review be? But one Marvel recent trend I'd like to commend is in the reprint books--they've actually increased the page-count from 18 to 19 pages! And a lot of the mystery books are using reprints from 1970-ish, the time of "Tower of Shadows"--more interesting than the fifties tales, by a long way.

MASTER OF KUNG FU ≠38, "Cat" by Doug Moench & Paul Gulacy, shows why one of the most often asked questions at Comic Marts is "Have you got any Gulacy issues of MoKF?"--there's some very graceful art here. MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ≠14 has Benjy playing host to Son of Satan, with a Bill Mantlo script and Trimpe/Tartag artwork; a competent job all round. And how about "Red Skull in the Sunset" as a title, for INVADERS ≠5--blame Roy Thomas for that, pencilers Rich Buckler and Dick Ayers were too busy doing a spot of Kirby research for an all-action issue -- leading into the Liberty Legion's debut in the next Marvel Premiere.

TOMB OF DRACULA ≠42, still monthly, as the lettercol admits because of the U.K. weekly's need for new material, is by the Creative Team Supreme (Marv/Gene/Tom) -- the checklist page calls it "The Night Staker", but thankfully the real title is "A Final Battle Waged". It's nice that some good's resulting from those 8p weeklies, but they'll never be popular with fans while they stop this title, plus Spider-Man, Hulk, and Avengers, from coming over.

A brief note to FF fans: MARVEL'S GREATEST COMICS ≠62 reprints, except for one unimportant page, FF ≠80's "Where Treads the Living Totem".

AVENGERS ≠145 is peculiar -- because of our old chum, the Dreaded Deadline Doom, it's the first half of an Isabella/Heck fill-in--with a different cover from the one in the checklist!

MARVEL TEAM-UP ≠43 has Spider-Man joined by Dr Doom--he's already got the Scarlet Witch and the Vision, and the 1692 plot's still warming up --next time, Moondragon joins them! At this rate, the book'll be a bit crowded in a year or two...

DARE-DEVIL ≠131, complete with the Universal Product Code on the cover, is a steady issue of a sturdy title, with lots of character development, and the coming of "Bullseye", a dart-player you won't see in your local pub--I hope, for your sake!

And one last Marvel? I must save some for "Worlds of Emlock" in Comics Unlimited, after all! WEREWOLF BY NIGHT ≠37, by Moench & Perlin, is entitled "The End"...and it is! Next issue, Jack Russell gets a new direction--Power Wolf? Ultrawolf? I wonder...

Since, like Omega, its cover repro is on Bemusing's cover this time, the first DC had better be JOKER ≠6 --"Sherlock Stalks the Joker", by O'Neil, Novick, & Blaisdell. And it's a good one--and more logical than I expected, with the master sleuth actually an actor who'd been playing Holmes, who apparently believes he is the great detective after the Joker bashes him on the head with his own meerschaum! Confident fun.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS ≠1 is the latest clambering-aboard the super-group band-wagon, from Martin "Pesky" Pasko (script), Ric "Layout Lad" Estrada, and letterer Mike Royer, who also finished the art. It's a continued story--but this first part's competently done, with Quality heroes Black Condor, Uncle Sam, Doll Man, The Ray, The Human Bomb, and Phantom Lady coming over to Earth-1 for a visit--and this time, Phantom Lady is given the ability to become a phantom! Wait till a certain female member of the LSH hears about this!

Which would be the dumbest comic for the old "kid-reading-a-comic-and-wishing-hero-was-real-while-Mr-Hero-comes-into-view-behind-him" cover? If you said OUR ARMY AT WAR (≠290), with Sgt Rock, you ought to get some sort of prize...

Let's see...Wonder Woman rejoins the JLA just in time for her funeral...the Unknown Soldier's running for safety again, not knowing two nazis are just round the corner...Superman looks on complacently as Clark Kent gets mugged...Santa Claus thumps Robin for six with his bag of presents...Batman's going to get a cannon-ball through his chest...ain't just looking at DC covers fun?

But, time for Charlton. MONSTER HUNTERS ≠4 (Feb) has a nice Joe Molloy/Mike Zeck werewolf tale; THE MANY GHOSTS OF DR GRAVES has DC's own Carl Wessler, plus a Tom Sutton yarn; MIDNIGHT TALES ≠16 is an all-Wayne Howard issue; VENGEANCE SQUAD ≠4 has the usual fine Michael Mauser Cuti/Staton 7-pager, inked by Bruce Patterson; CREEPY THINGS ≠4 has Sutton, VALLEY OF THE DINOSAURS ≠6 (a kiddy-title) is by Fred Himes, and, more importantly, PHANTOM ≠68 (Dec) is written by Cuti and drawn by Newton--a good book to end on.

REACTION

Send your letters to: Martin Lock.

Dear Martin,

It was not very nice of your mob to put the blame for cutting the letters page on little ol' me. I'll forward all letterbombs to you, okay?

But seriously folks (?), I don't want to see Reaction cut any more than you do, but if you have to cut something, cut the letters. With the Panelologist having two-thirds of its space full of letters, we don't need another forum.

And keep those letters which just have things to say about Bem off the letters page, unless they have lots to say or stuff that you'd like an opinion on. Just use letters that are good for a laugh, or have a specific point to make.

The letters in Bem ≠7 were excellent (and if I say letters one more time I'm gonna get stuck like it, work that one out yourself I ain't gonna tell you what "it" is).

Might as well have my say about the Comics Code Authority. As far as I see it the C.C.A. is only voluntary, and comics firms don't have to take any notice of it. If some firm wanted to do a story about a randy bugger who likes chopping people's heads off (Ironjaw, Conan) they could tell the C.C.A. where to go--and what to do when they got there! But all comic fans should be grateful to censorship for dragging comics out of the rut they were in before about 1960.

To finish; I liked the new cover logo, but I'm still trying to decide if it has a better effect than the old one. Weird Trash ≠3 was very funny, and a much better quality of printing than ≠2. Bem is up to the same high standard, and I would only be repeating myself if I talked about it now. Good luck with Bem ≠8.

Long live E-Man!

Laurence Milsted.

And long live Nova too, don't forget, Laurence.

Dear Martin,

Thanks for Bem-7 & WT-3; both superior to the previous issues, though Bem only slightly so, probably due to the thinness of the issue --you won't be incorporating WT in every issue, so that solves itself. Best part of the Weird Trash was the "cover repro" gallery, a good idea that Jack should retain on a permanent basis. What's he going to take-off next? Comics Unlimited perhaps, or TBS? The suspense is crippling...

How the hell do you manage to be so prolific, anyway? Is it just practise, or monkey glands, or what?

Howard Stangroom.

Who's been talking? But who will be next in line for Mr Straw's not-so-tender attentions is an interesting question. Fantasy Advertiser? Thing? Panelologist? News of the World...?

Dear Martin,

Thank you for Bemusing 7--up to its usual high standard. I wish I'd known that you were going to become the British Agent for the Comic Heroine Fan Club <u>before</u> I sent them an expensive international money order. Still, careful perusal of the FU ad on page 10 has just saved me making a similar mistake with the Legion Outpost.

Censorship. In some ways, I agree with Hunter Tremayne's "compromise" opinion. On the other-hand, though, surely the comics publishers would not, in the event of the Code being abolished, immediately start to introduce blatant violence and sex right, left and centre. And if such elements were handled with subtlety and good taste, and not over-emphasized, wouldn't they go over the heads of the younger readers?

Take rape, for instance--sex <u>and</u> violence. The Code forbids rape to be shown, or even suggested. But, some time ago, a definite <u>suggestion</u> of it slipped through the CCA in, of all magazines, an issue of Wonder Woman, ≠204. They were doing the usual re-hash of the origin of the Amazons, and there were two panels depicting life under the domination of Mars. In panel 1, a soldier had grabbed a girl and was dragging her towards the panel border. In panel 2, the soldiers have gone --and the girl, clothes torn and dishevelled, is staring straight ahead of her in shock as an older woman tries to comfort her. Now, it's pretty obvious to the older reader what happened between the panels, but I don't think it would be to an eight-year-old. Admittedly it would not be so easy to give this kind of down-playing to, say, someone's head being bashed in or chopped off, but I think the publishers could be trusted to remember their young readers and not go too far

Speaking of censorship, there's another total absurdity in JLA 121. In ≠120, five Leaguers get disintegrated, leaving only their costumes, on Rann. Adam Strange picks up said costumes and takes them to Earth, God knows why, I'm sure the other members would have taken his word for it. Then he goes back to Rann with Kanjar Ro's energy --pardon me, energi-rod, re-integrates the five; and they have their costumes on. There is a feeble attempt at justifying this--he orders the rod to return them to their 'original form and costume' but no-one explains how it accomplished the costuming bit. Either it can teleport things from Earth, or it knows a Japanese tailor. Shame, that. We might have got to see if Superman is <u>really</u> super.

Kathleen Glancy.

And is Wonder Woman really wonderful? If we stay reading a few more years, we may well find out.

Dear Martin,

Thank you for Bem ≠7; extremely interesting, as usual.

(a) It's too small (a whole page advert? Yes, I know, it's money, isn't it?).

(b) Ought to be monthly.

As for "Weird Trash"--let me just say that it's aptly named! A friend made an interesting point; why do British fanzines feel such a compelling need to include pathetic dollops of rank bad humour? (Captain Nuts?) Humour is very difficult to write--it takes a professional to write humour and ought to be left to those who can do it. I'm not saying there isn't a place for humour in a fanzine, or satire, but the standard is very often so low that it can ruin a very competent fanzine.

Did you hear the one about--?

Be that as it may, "Weird Trash" did make some interesting points (though I'm sure they could have been made in a better way), namely the obvious similarities between Bem and "The Comic Reader"...

I was hoping that, when Marvel shelved a few titles, they would give more quality instead of quantity. How wrong can you be? Not only are a lot of new titles very poor, but it's affecting some of the others too, GHOST RIDER, LUKE CAGE POWER FAILURE, and goodness knows how many more.

Keep up the good work.

Maurice Cousins.

And how many Bem readers subscribe to TCR? But our news coverage has been a bit similar lately, I agree -- so Bem's going to tone down the "Dick Ayers is inking the cover of an upcoming issue of Marvel's Grotesquest Comics", and try to find room for an article or two. "Luke Cage, Power Failure"? I'm afraid that Weird Trash got to you!

Dear Martin,

Thanks very much for the copy of Bem-7, with extra weird, trashy pages. I prefer your new logo to the old, but it would look better if it was stretched right across the top -- er, even with Captain Nuts leaning on the side! The illos were their usual range of brilliant and abysmal--Greg Chown's work I usually enthuse over, but that Conan figure was awful. Never mind, the Leslie Stannage GL head and Mercy van Vlack's Supergirl more than compensated for it. Superswipe's still on his E-Man trip, but I'm not complaining; his swipes are very competent.

I see Richard Burton's immortalized in "Jungle Action" again, with a Comic Media plug, yet! Gosh, and I've actually spoken to him!

Incidentally, as you often ask for ideas to improve Bem, I wondered if you'd thought about a a very long (full page) review of a current comic --a sort of "Panorama" alongside the usual "Book Programme"! Just an idea...

This letter will self-destruct in 3 seconds...

Hunter Tremayne.

And it did, friends! But that's an interesting idea, a long, detailed review of a new comic at article length--but where do I find the space?

Dear Martin,

Bem is rapidly improving, so that for a meagre 10p per issue you are producing a top value zine.

I was happy to see that you're encouraging more fan art; I particularly liked Leslie Stannage's Green Lantern. About Greg Chown; the work he has done recently for Bemusing has been rather poor, especially his Conan last issue, but his cover for Starzine ≠3 was very good.

Thanks for the cover repro of Howard the Duck, but really, "Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch"?!? About the censorship debate; I personally agree with what Hunter Tremayne said, I think if there is going to be anything published which the comic code doesn't approve of, it should be published in a black & white mag where the code has no hold over things. Anyhow, that's my view.

Long live Howard the Duck!

Martin Cohen, Waltham Cross

And Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch forever, chum!

Dear Martin,

Yes, you've guessed it, this is part 2 of my letter on Bem ≠7. Don't worry, it's quite normal for me to read a zine, write a letter, read it again, and then write another letter. Well, after all, they're my stamps.

Starting with the cover: I still haven't made my mind up about the new title logo, but what the heck, it can't make that much difference. And the Conan illo was very nice--more, please.

Missing the next few pages, on to Reg Uspatoff's America, which has become something to look forward to along with Ed Sallis's (now thankfully returned to two pages) Fan-Things.

At last I reach the reviews which, with little bits of humour from Nige, are up to their usual high standard. I especially liked the Opinion on Atlas by Hunter Tremayne; I too think Atlas was only formed to make a lot of money fast. As Mr Tremayne said, with that kind of attitude you don't get anywhere.

Laurence Milsted, Chiswell Green, St Albans

And he wrote a third letter, too! But he still only gets one complimentary copy of Bem...

Martin,

I believe I would find it, eh, bemusing to work for your zine, so I shall contribute!

I'm pleased that Supergirl was used, since I sent it to Alan A. too late for inclusion with a Legion article -- glad someone could use it. And since you used it for such a worthy cause as the Heroine Addict -- all the better!

An item of interest in the DC news, "The Secret Society of Super Villains with Star Sapphire--not Carol Ferris" leads me to wonder if the Zamorians (Carol's cause to be Star Sapphire) have chosen another queen, or maybe DC is reviving the 1948 Flash foe of that name. She was truly evil, Carol Ferris only took to crime from the compulsion of the sapphire gem. I've enclosed an illo of both ladies with this letter, as well as a picture of Black Bolt inked by Wes Smith, who is a correspondent of mine, Sun Boy and Saturn Girl of the Legion out for an evening stroll, er, flight, and Rick Jones in his new Funny Suit.

Leslie Stannage's Green Lantern picture on page 2 certainly caught my eye! It looks very much like the Adams version of the Emerald Gladiator.

QUERY: Do I get a complimentary copy if I continue to send artwork? Pretty Please? I also enjoyed Weird Trash, it was silly and fun!

Mercy van Vlack.

All I can say, Mercy, is -- welcome to Bem!

Dear Martin,

Many thanks for another fine issue of Bemusing --I really do like the feel of this magazine, it's just the right size so that it can be interesting and not too boring.

On to the features; I think that the news pages are a waste of space--leave it to C.M. News. Reg Uspatoff's America is the sort of column you should use, with information and opinions with ideas to back these up, not like some fanzine writers I know. Of course Fan-Things and Emlock Tale-Enders were well up to standard, and most of the reviews were good.

Now, the criticism this issue is centred on the art. Please! If you want to keep Superswipe in Bem, have him do some original art. Greg Chown also must either take more time over his art or go. You must keep a high quality of articles and art, and cut down on the cover repros if you are to survive.

Weird Trash was, to paraphrase a certain well-known teenager, FAANTASTIC!

John Fennessy.

But if Superswipe did original art, he wouldn't still be Superswipe, John! I'm sorry you, and a few others, didn't like some of Greg Chown's art in recent Bems -- it's my fault, some of it I've had on file for about a year. I'll be fussier in future! Less news in Bems to come? Well, okay -- but Bem-9 won't be "the right size", I fear-- it's going to be a double issue!

Dear Martin,

Not having a lot of free time for such things, I've not corresponded before. But this time two things draw me to such action. Firstly, my new address, which I hope you'll take note of.

Secondly, I have to refute the fatuous 3-point argument of Hunter Tremayne in Bem #7. I could write an essay on each of his points, but, since they were stated so briefly, I'll reply to each with equal brevity.

1. Do kids need protection from sex and naked bodies? I think not! It is only the guarded attitudes of our society that give it such a mystique, anyway. Sex should be taught early, openly, and have the shame removed.

2. The floodgates that might be opened only threaten because of the present drought. A free attitude may initially lead to a glut of rubbish, but eventually readers' attitudes would level out the market.

3. If poor Mr Tremayne adjusts his life-style every time an old harridan raises hell, he must be a very bored and frustrated person.

In this case, surely, compromise is cowardice. We must fight for what we believe in fully, not water it down for the sake of the reactionary who may be offended.

Pete Taylor.

Dear Martin,

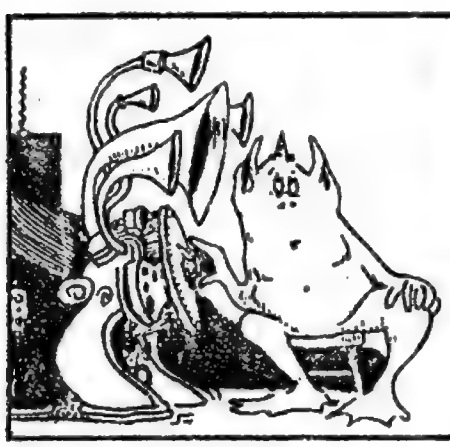
I think it was in F Advertiser that I read that Bem is a "poor man's CMN"; I can't fully agree with that, Bem has its own character, be it that of an inmate of Bedlam, while CMN is straight with no deviations toward humour. With Bem I like the silly jokes (schoolboy stuff, but amusing nevertheless), and I like the fact that there's a bit of comment here and there, and that artists are given a shade more space than in CMN.

Points against Bem 7? One, it seemed thin, but WT made up for that. Two, the Captain Nuts strip --it left me cold, but perhaps this is because I am not used to it. Three, the Hulk 194 review, I don't follow Hulk stories but I'll bet that this disappointed one or two people, a comment on how Staton came out in this one should have been inserted surely. Four, I can't think up a fourth point, and the previous three aren't as bad as all that. I just hope Bem is fairly regular. And, if nothing else, that Kirby Captain America cover was good to see and made Bem even more attractive --now, let's see if Richard Burton uses it too.

Keep up the good work, here and in all the other fanzines.

J.H. Szostek.

And on that note, Bem's longest lettercol yet is drawn to a close. Al Walker, Bem's newest artist, suggested 3 pages--I hope he's satisfied! And he wants Captain Nuts to remain a regular feature, anyway, even if he called the gent on the Review Section heading "A reject from 'the point' trying to crack a quintophonic safe". But if your letter didn't get published this time, it's probably because you forgot to write it. Published letters gain you a complimentary copy of Bem, you know!



REVIEW SECTION

MARVEL CHILLERS #3 (February)
Tigra in "Holocaust is Our Business"
by Tony Isabella, Will Meugniot, Frank Chiaramonte, and Sam Grainger.

After more than a year of waiting, Tigra finally returns to the colour pages...but this time it <u>is</u> a return well worth waiting for. A starkly dramatic cover, quite conservative for Marvel in having only three unnecessary and garish blurbs, leads into a nineteen-page extravaganza called "Holocaust is Our Business" --the villain of the piece is Joshua Plague, a mysterious type who bears a resemblance to Tigra's own Cat People and controls a team of six deadly criminals, each a specialist in their own field.

The tale is narrated by Tigra herself, and Isabella portrays her very well; her wry and often bitter sense of humour comes to the fore as she tells of the mysterious seven's attacks on entire communities, and her struggle to release one of the Cat People--a scientist who may be able to restore her to her human form--who was trapped in such an attack and is now imprisoned by the police. There's plenty for the action buffs, with a battle with Plague's group, and a cameo at the end of the issue denotes Red Wolf's guest appearance next time, as the story continues two months hence...

Meugniot is an artist new to my experience, but his rendering of Tigra is superb; she is subtly exotic, a little fleshier than the Tony DeZuniga version, more feline and less ethereal --a positive delight to gaze upon/leer at.

A very impressive effort all round, more so when one considers Tigra/the Cat's chequered career so far...let's hope that she's found a home at last. -Howard Stangroom

BLACK GOLIATH #1 (February)
by Tony Isabella, George Tuska, & Colletta

At the moment, this is one of the poorest new Marvel titles. The character isn't bad, but as long as Isabella writes it and Tuska (unusually) draws it as badly as they're doing now, then this mag will go into oblivion.

In fact, not much happened this ish. I feel ready to fall asleep now. -Martin Cohen

E-MAN #10 (September)
"The Witch of Hog Wallow" by Cuti & Staton, plus "Rog-2000 vs the Sog" by Cuti & Byrne

To end his series with an 'origin' story may sound pretty dumb, but that's the way it is. The adventures with Maisy-June are a bit corny in parts, although there is a clever touch when she is lured towards funny farm by E-Man projecting the image of an enchanted kingdom, castle and all. As George Wildman informs us in E-Mail, the series has been axed because of poor sales -- but addicts can catch up on the latest by reading The Charlton Bullseye. -PH

The last issue of arguably the best comic of the past few years. In this story, we learn what happened when E-Man came to Earth before he met Nova; would you believe the first thing he changed into was a Bambi? A wonderful tale full of all the charm and genius this series is famous for, with apologies to Al Capp. Add to that a Rog-2000 episode, and you have a classic comic--the only bad thing is the cover painting, which isn't all that exciting or well-coloured, and of course the fact that the E-Man book has been cancelled. Oh well, at least he'll live on in the Charlton Bullseye fanzine; let's hope that, with the current decline of horror comics and the resurgence of super-heroes, Charlton will bring E-Man back (and Captain Atom, and Blue Beetle, and...). Anyway, in the meantime, don't weep too loud; as long as comics fans remember him, E-Man will never die. -Paul D! Gravett

What went wrong? "Fan reaction to our hero has been spectacular, but the general public has never taken him to heart, resulting in poor sales", George Wildman tells us--but why? When so many poorer titles flourish, a fine, original series goes to the wall. Was it the covers? Recently they have been rather watery paintings, not showing E-Man to best advantage, and #10's is the worst yet -- with no Nova for only the 3rd time. Or is it that Charlton just aren't geared to handle a superhero title?

After only two years, the most innovative, most original new comic for three decades is dead--that's a bad, BAD sign. -Ruan Lanihorne

"THE VENGEANCE OF ATLAS"
by Dave J. Edge

Y'know, it's nice to say to a fanzine editor that everything that one read in his magazine was excellent, and that every opinion raised was firmly agreed with. I'd like to say this about Bem #7... only I cannot. This was the best ish to date, except for a stupid piece in the review column. It was "The Rise and Fall of Atlas Comics"--for one thing, the very last issues hadn't shown up then, so how he could pen that review I'll never know!

The man behind that review? Hunter Tremayne. So, let's see what I'm so boiled up about... "Atlas never had a chance" (and we live in a democratic society!). "For 'Hulk' substitute 'Brute', for 'Conan' substitute 'Ironjaw'.." Now, Ironjaw may be a revamped 'Conan', but what about 'Claw' and a few others? And I can't see how 'Brute' is so much like 'Hulk', he's not as strong, he doesn't look like him, his origin is entirely different. Good grief! Next he'll be saying that Man-Thing is like the Thing, as they have the same type of bra.

Then the crunch. Mister Tremayne says that Mike Fleisher is "the most Macabre Bastard in the history of comics". What's he been reading for the last five years--Noddy? -DJE

But Dave, I don't want Bem to only reflect one view--I'm glad you found something to disagree with! My main regret is that nobody took issue with Reg Uspatoff's allegations that the team books are mere "kid stuff"--I'd expected some Avengers, JLA, Defenders, LSH, or FF fans to take him to task! It's too late now, though!

CONAN #59 (February)
"The Ballad of Bêlit" by Roy Thomas, John Buscema, and Steve Gan

So we get further into the Cimmerian's "Amra" phase, with this issue's origin saga of the beautiful Bêlit, competently rendered by Roy Thomas, the ubiquitous John Buscema, and the new "permanent" inker Steve Gan. Artwise, it's an improvement over the recent Palmer-inked issues, which were somewhat disappointing when you recall that team's previous triumphs.

Interesting incidentals this go-round, with the return of the double letter page, the (2nd series) value stamp, and the promised return of the checklist ('ray!) along with ads which offer the 1976 Marvel calendar, the "Son of Origins" book, Spider-Man vitamin pills, a (new) Spider-Man record, and (yippee!) a new Spidey "Hostess Twinkie" ad! No, Irving, it's not better than the previous one...

Ne'er mind, though -- the Buscema cover is above par, and the story inside is as great as ever.

Crom! -Hunter Tremayne

WARLORD #1 (February)
"This Savage World" by Mike Grell

As, despite the Feb '76 cover date, it came out in November, this must go down as one of the best-drawn mags of 1975 -- and the story's not bad either. The script itself is good, no more no less, but it's the artwork I want to discuss.

Grell has drawn Warlord in the style of the Adams Green Arrow (obvious in the sharp white beard), and the effects are spellbinding--art connoisseurs watch out for this one! But, to end on a sad note, DC are suspending the mag, pending sales reports. It looks like another quality magazine down the drain. -Martin Cohen

Lemme see now--hackneyed, sub-Burroughs plot, clichéd hero and heroine, Kirby dialogue and carbon-copy artwork--why the hell won't DC try to create new plots, new characters, and new premises?

Regurgitation time: Blackhawk, Plastic Man, All Star Comics, etc. Jump-on-the-bandwagon or steal-a-good-formula time: Beowulf, Stalker, Kung Fu Fighter, Claw.

Wake up and shake up, DC! You're losing fans and you're losing me. -Hunter Tremayne

AVENGERS #144 (February)
"Claws" by Englehart, Perez & Esposito

In the beginning, there was Patsy Walker--a sort of Archie Andrews/Millie the Model hybrid, she enjoyed a mild popularity during the 50's and early 60's, but the strip died a slow death circa 1965.

Why this in a review of the Avengers, you ask? Simple...in what must be one of the most surprising moves of the decade, Avengers #144 has Patsy assuming the discarded mantle of Greer Nelson, a.k.a. the Cat (now, of course, known as Tigra) and with surprising credibility considering her former rôle in the Marvel Universe; now, as the Hellcat, she promises to be a very interesting character indeed.

As to the rest of the mag, Steve Englehart involves the Avengers in a chase through Brand & Roxxon Industries, pursued by assorted guided missiles and the Squadron Supreme/Sinister; the Two-Gun Kid announces to Moondragon & Thor his intentions of travelling back to the twentieth century, and new artist George Perez, with Esposito inks, becomes more accustomed to the group, and turns in a fair job...

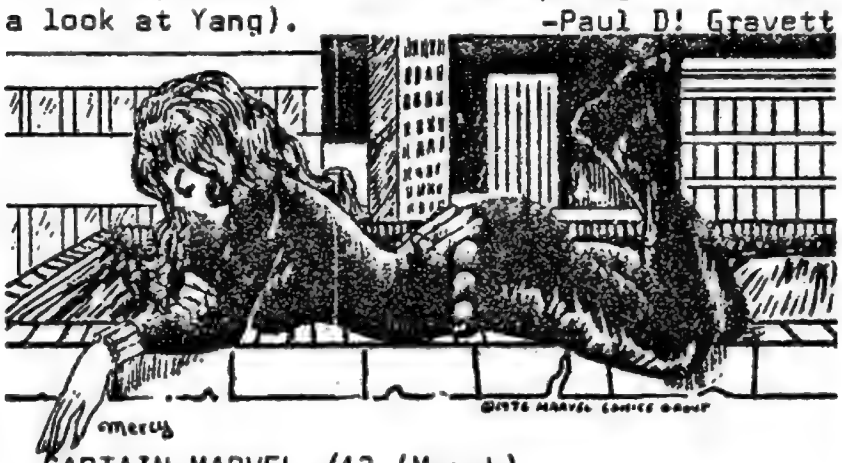
Considering all the old and new heroes, and the plethora of supporting characters currently appearing, it's not surprising that this book has retained its popularity after so many years -- they're the best written and also the most versatile super-team of them all.

Now if only Patsy Walker would dye her hair black... -Howard Stangroom

DOOMSDAY + 1 ≠2 (September)
"A Faceless Foe" by Joe Gill & John Byrne

This is an excellent issue, better than ≠1 in cover, art and story. For one thing, this issue is full of Byrne robots with clumpy feet just like Rog 2000. There's also an intriguing development in the caveman Kuno, who's rapidly adjusting to modern civilisation.

All in all, a really good title -- it isn't easy to believe it's written by Joe Gill, who is hardly famed for good scripting (just take a look at Yang). -Paul D! Gravett



CAPTAIN MARVEL ≠43 (March)
"Destroy! Destroy!" by Englehart & Milgrom

SF's Batman & Robin continue in fine form, and Rick's new girl is in pretty fine form herself! (Hyuck) The Destroyer (who should be given his own series) returns, and proves the old proverb about absolute power. A good buy for the coming months. -Nige Edwards

BLACKHAWK ≠244 (February)
"Death's Right Hand" by Skeates & Evans

Our erudite editor seems less than knocked out (see Panelologist ≠4) by this seven-year late 244th issue -- I can't concur. A lot has happened in those seven years; overwrought Adamsesque anatomical hysteria and Gil Kane's mannered angularity have invaded comic book art at all levels. The unmitigated pretentiousness of early Gerry Conway has led to the semi literate and pseudo-lyrical excesses of people like Bill Mantlo and Don McGregor.

Now, the plot here may not be so hot, but the writing is terse, witty, incisive, and fluent; the art is deceptively loose, but beautifully controlled, with a flowing and underplayed dynamism. Just buy it. -Chris Ash

AVENGERS ≠143 (January)
"Right Between The Eons" by Steve Englehart, George Perez & Sam Grainger

At last The Avengers, or more precisely Steve Englehart, has got the right artist for it (or him). With all the subplots and characters, the title needs an artist who can manage both small panels and splash pages--an artist who can help the story flow, a problem that has plagued the title in the past. Gentleman George Perez. -RA

KOBRA ≠1 (March)
"Fangs of the Kobra" by Jack Kirby
rewritten by Pasko, redrawn by Marcos

This is a pretty promising effort for a first issue, and should be even better when Kirby is replaced by Chic Stone--not that Kirby's work isn't good, it's just that Kirby's 'kid-type appeal' artwork doesn't suit this book.

But now, on to the story. It's about a pair of siamese twins separated at birth, one good and one evil (the evil one had been thought dead, but in fact he'd been taken by the cult of the Kobra, and eventually grew up to be the leader), and the link they have between them--if one of them is hurt, the other suffers too.

A good effort. -Martin Cohen

A sad disappointment, this latest of Kirby creations...or perhaps, as there's no element of surprise involved, disappointment is not quite the right word. Kirby's series, once so creative, are now merely pretentious, and while Kobra raises the standard a notch or two from the flyblown Manhunter (mainly because of the colossal overhaul it's received from Martin Pasko, Gerry Conway, Pablo Marcos, and others), one would still have to retrieve said standard with a shovel. The old "siamese twins separated at birth but still retaining an empathic bond despite being on opposite sides of the law" bit is back, folks.

Our hero, Jason Burr, is clichéd and boring; his brother, Kobra, head of a mysterious, pseudo-eastern cult, is only slightly less so; the only satisfactory character is Lt. Perez of the police, who talks Burr into setting an ambush for his brother, and then attempts to kill Kobra--disregarding the fact that killing Kobra will also kill the totally innocent (if dull) Mr Burr. Frankly, I found it impossible to care whether he succeeded or not--in fact, I found it very difficult to stay awake during the proceedings. The cover, by Ernie Chua and not, as stated on the text page, Kubert, is very nice; the rest is rhubarb. It just won't do, gentlemen. -Howard Stangroom

Let me be perfectly honest about this -- I'm a New Gods heretic. Characterisation and dialogue are not Jack Kirby's strong points, the entire Fourth World foundered on these twin sloughs. Ironically enough, the Kobra is the first new DC Kirby karakter to truly interest me, partly due to Marty Pasko's rewriting of the dialogue. However, Mr Pasko also instructed the inexcusable redrawing of a number of Jack Kirby's faces; the result could well bring tears to your eyes. If so, you'll be well prepared for Chic Stone next issue. -Chris Ash

Well, now that I've read it, all I can say is that it's a right load of old Kobras...-NPE

Have you investigated the worlds of Fantasy Unlimited yet? Volume One of the DC INDEX, covering the heroes of the second heroic age (A to I) from the debut of The Flash in Showcase #4 on, is now available--for 40p, it's the most extensive index to comics ever compiled, with every character described and illustrated, and a Rafa front cover.

And have you bought a copy of THE COMIC-BOOK PRICE GUIDE FOR GREAT BRITAIN yet, with 60 pages of information on how much the comics that we collect are worth? It only costs 38p by post, and will save you pounds! And the 100-page FANTASY UNLIMITED ANNUAL 1975 (50p by post) is still available, with articles on Star Trek, U.S. fanzines, Jack Kirby, Spider-Man, and British comics, plus a quiz, a portfolio by Paul Jay, artwork by Russ Nicholson, Bonk, Antonio Ghura, Superswipe, and others, strips by Steve Craddock and Barry Clements & Keith Luck, and a marvelous front cover of Dr Strange by John Bolton--add fiction by Gary Watton, Nigel Long, and Bill (Solarman) Ryan, and you've got a fanzine to remember!

Don't forget COMICS UNLIMITED, Britain's only monthly fanzine--CU #34 is due out very soon, featuring all the regular features and artists, and a block-busting article on The Shadow, DC's master of darkness! And in future issues you'll find a different kind of sword & sorcery strip by Barry Clements & Greg Chown, an article on The Atom by Martin Lock, and articles on as many of your favourite Marvel and DC heroes as we can manage. Comics Unlimited costs 25p from your favourite comic shop, or is available by post from us -- a four-issue subscription is still only £1.00, 8 issues for £1.85, or 12 for £2.50, which means two issues are free! Remember our address, for fanzines and comics--it's 180 (basement) Lower Clapton Road, Clapton, London E5. And remember the name -- Fantasy Unlimited!

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-kindly mention BEMUSING MAGAZINE when replying to advertisements-

DR STRANGE #11 (December)
"Shadowplay" by Englehart, Colan, & Palmer

Colan/Palmer genius, bringing back all those classic issues in the 60s, but, in my opinion, topping them, with superior scripting. Baron Mordo & Eternity are around, and, according to "Strange Mails", Palmer is here to stay -- I certainly hope so. A great issue. -PDG

JUSTICE INC #4 (December)
"Slay Ride In the Sky" by Denny O'Neil, Jack Kirby, and Mike Royer

How this title has managed to survive up until now is beyond me--it has no real worthwhile qualities about it. Kirby's art is below par, even though O'Neil gives a reasonable script about a man causing planes to crash and benefiting from the insurance money--it seems just like a Doc Savage tale.

The thing that gets me about this title is that Richard (The Avenger) Benson acts too much like a typical superhero; you would never believe that a couple of deaths had taken place in his family. Like issue 3, the script is not based on Kenneth Robeson's series of novels. The only redeeming feature of this issue is the nice Kubert cover -- otherwise, I think DC have bombed out on Justice Inc. -JG

HULK #197 (March)
"...And Man-Thing Makes Three" by Len Wein, Sal Buscema & Joe Staton

Instead of the usual silly review I do of this comic, our eminent editor has requested I do an intelligent, thought-provoking and explorative review, so here goes--this issue is...ha, ha...er...and it's...well...sorta..like...er...are you sure I can't do another silly review, Em? ((I knew we were asking for too much -ML))-NPE

AMAZING ADVENTURES #34 (January)
Killraven in "A Death in the Family"
by Don McGregor and Craig Russell

A Death in the Family! The story you thought you'd never see! Those two statements combined with Golden Locks looking distinctly pale on the front cover--could it be the end? No such luck, although Killraven has his fair share of narrow escapes in the 18 pages to follow. The confrontation between Skar and Freemen is portrayed unusually well, and although H.G. Wells has been forgotten long ago, this tale deserves to succeed on its own newly-found merits. -Paul Hudson

And that's the lot; Richard Ashford, Nigel P. Edwards, and Jan Garczynski are the reviewers only identified by their initials.

RICH MORRISSEY'S AMERICA

Rumours fly so quickly around fandom circles that perhaps the most useful thing I can do this time is debunk some that have been widely repeated--by me among others--before the truth came out. To begin with, Murray Boltinoff is <u>not</u> going to be retiring, as was originally reported by an over-enthusiastic employee of National, after all. I'm told he was close to retirement age but apparently National decided he, like Perry White, deserved to stay on if he wanted to.

I'm also officially informed that FLASH and SUPERBOY/LEGION are <u>not</u> going monthly, after all -- both are very good sellers, though, and plans have been changed at the last minute, as far as frequency goes, very often -- remember the monthly WEIRD WESTERN and the bimonthly KAMANDI that never materialised?

Karate Kid will <u>not</u> be appearing with the Legion while his own book is running -- which will be only three issues for now. Like most new DC titles, the magazine will be revived if the tryout issues are successful. Nor will <u>all</u> of the company's 50c books be all-reprint--SUPERMAN FAMILY and BATMAN FAMILY will continue to run at least as much new material as a regular book. SUPER-TEAM FAMILY will indeed revert to reprints with #4, but this is the equivalent of suspension for a 36-page book--the title will presumably feature new stories again if sales are good enough. TARZAN FAMILY, like TARZAN now under Joe Orlando's editorship, will continue to feature new stories of Korak and other Burroughs characters.

It's pretty clear that SWAMP THING is to have a new writer--not surprisingly, as David Michelinie is taking most of Paul Levitz's work upon his own shoulders. Some say it will be Gerry Conway, others that it'll be somebody I've never heard of--let's hope whoever it is will carry on the Wein/Michelinie quality. He might be getting a new artist, too.

Dick Dillin, I think, is going to be leaving WORLD'S FINEST to take over the Superman tales in ACTION. I don't know why Curt Swan can't keep it up, but he'll continue to pencil the stories in SUPERMAN.

I suppose you all know by now that, with Ben Grimm himself again, Power Man will replace him in FANTASTIC FOUR -- I don't know about MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE! -Rich Morrissey

THE ALL-NEW FANHUNTER

Well, although I'm not writing "Fan-Things" this time, as I'm not going to be in London over Christmas, I can still do a "Fanhunter" column for the CFB part--after all, Rob Barrow has a tradition of holding back from printing CFB until my column has an old-fashioned, and generally quaint, flavour, filing this column a week or so early doesn't matter so much.

First, for a touch of class, I picked up a copy of CARTOONIST PROfiles #26 (June '75) at Compendium recently--$3.00, or £1.65. This is mainly concerned with newspaper strips and cartoons (and their creators), and it's really fascinating to read about strips we've never heard of, like "Dooley's World" and a sports commentator called "Tank McNamara", plus "BC" by Johnny Hart...but for comic-book fans, how about articles on Norman Mingo and his work for MAD, Golden Age artist Fred Guardineer, with a new 3-page story, and EC's own Harvey Kurtzman? It's all very adult and professional with type-setting throughout--a little dry and stuffy, even? But certainly interesting.

I was in Camden Town (on the Northern Line, for all Underground fans) to investigate Rob's latest money-making scheme, a stall just down the road from Compendium in Dingwalls Market; the two places so close together certainly are worth a visit, and Rob's pricing on the new imports (25c titles at 18p or less) is good; Compendium itself tends to be a little pricier than Dark They Were &c for fanzines, books, and other comic-related items (no ordinary DC or Marvel comics), but there's a wide choice.

You've probably seen mentions of Dave Edge's project, ALL STAR MAGAZINE, in CU or CM News; I've managed to get some further details. It's going to be different from the general run of news/features/columns/articles fanzines around --instead, it's going to concentrate on all-original super-hero adventures, both in strips and text stories. Bill W. Ryan's "Solarman" will fly again (remember his origin in last year's FU Annual?) in new stories, and there's to be a ten-page strip featuring the coming of "Starr, the Selector" written by Bill & drawn by Dave, plus enough features to give London its fair share of super-doers! I've even heard rumours of a group called "The Successors"...

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Martin would probably never forgive me if I didn't mention The Heroine Addict, the main fanzine of the Comics Heroines Fan Club, the organisation for which he's the (honorary and unpaid) British Agent. Send him £2.00 or more to start you off, saying whether you want THA etc by air (75p out of your account) or sea (50p), and you'll be sent goodies like...

THE HEROINE ADDICT #8 (Dec) is the newest publication from the CHFC, who also publish a fiction magazine (The Adventuress) devoted to super- and other heroines; under examination this time around are Aquagirl, the newest TV Wonder Woman, Modesty Blaise (by our effulgent editor), three Star Trek heroines, Vampirella, Mantis, and "The Bionic Woman" from the Six Million Dollar Man show, plus, in columns by Bob Rodi, Mercy van Vlack etc just about every heroine from Alura to Zatanna. Forty pages, art varying from passable to excellent, Rich Morrissey on a Wonder Woman stage musical...

The friendliest U.S. fanzine I've seen. -EMS

MARVEL TO EXPERIMENT WITH FOUR TITLES AT 30 CENTS

Marvel are to increase the price of four of their books to 30 cents, effective with the issues cover-dated June. They are: Ka-Zar (from ≠16); Inhumans (≠5); Conan (≠63); and The Defenders (≠36).

The only logical reason for this move would be to see how the sales of these four books compare with the other Marvel titles, but I am told this was not the reason. The first person to come up with the right answer wins a No-Prize.

MARVEL BOOKS GO UP TO TEN PENCE IN BRITAIN

It seems quite likely that the price of the American Marvel books in Britain will increase to 10p some time in the New Year, probably about June or July.

UP AND COMING TITLES FOR BRITISH DISTRIBUTION

As you will see from the list below, February sees the first issue of Black Goliath, followed in March by Omega the Unknown; both are bi-monthly. Out in July will be the Jack Kirby "Return of the Gods", to be published monthly, and in August the return of Kull the Destroyer with ≠16.

It is also 90% certain that we will be getting the new Kirby "2001, A Space Odyssey" 25-center (30-center?), first issue cover-dated December.

TREASURY EDITIONS: U.K.

The missing Avengers £1.50 Treasury Edition may possibly be coming over; it seems that in the rush to get the Holiday Grab-Bag over in time for the festive season the printers in the U.S. never got round to shipping the Avengers book. There is a 50/50 chance of the 2001 and Captain America Bi-centennial treasury editions coming over.

The Superman/Spider-Man £2 team-up will be on sale at the end of January in this country, priced at 75p.

MEMO TO ALL COMIC FANDOM BULLETIN SUBSCRIBERS...

My apologies for the delay in publishing the 4th issue, but no sooner do I drop the Comic Marts in the lap of Nick Landau, so as to give me time to do an issue of CFB, than I end up running a stall at the Dingwalls Market, Camden Lock. That's the reason for this "Fandom Team-Up". The next Comic Fandom Bulletin will be a special final double issue; it will be on sale during the

(continued on page 94

The following lists are of the Marvel Comics to be distributed in this country over the next three months.

Cover-dated FEBRUARY, on sale the last week of January.		Cover-dated MARCH, on sale the last week of February.		Cover-dated APRIL, on sale the last week of March	
Black Goliath	1	Amazing Adventures	35	Black Goliath	2
Captain America	194	Astonishing Tales	34	Captain America	196
Champions	3	Captain America	195	Champions	5
Conan	59	Captain Marvel	43	Conan	61
Daredevil	130	Champions	4	Daredevil	132
Defenders	32	Conan	60	Defenders	34
Dr. Strange	12	Daredevil	131	Dr. Strange	13
Fantastic Four	167	Defenders	33	Fantastic Four	169
Ghost Rider	16	Fantastic Four	168	Ghost Rider	17
Inhumans	3	Howard The Duck	2	Inhumans	4
Iron Fist	3	Invaders	5	Iron Fist	4
Iron Man	83	Iron Man	84	Iron Man	85
Ka-Zar	14	Jungle Action	20	Ka-Zar	15
Marvel Chillers	3	Marvel Feature	3	Marvel Chillers	4
Marvel Premiere	28	Marvel Team-up	43	Marvel Premiere	29
Marvel Presents	3	Marvel Triple Action	28	Marvel Presents	4
Marvel Spotlight	2	Marvel Two In One	14	Marvel Spotight	2
Marvel Team-up	42	Master Of Kung Fu	38	Marvel Team-up	44
Master Of Kung Fu	37	Omega The Unknown	1	Master Of Kung Fu	39
Powerman	29	Skull The Slayer	4	Powerman	30
Son Of Satan	2	Strange Tales	184	Son Of Satan	3
Super-Villain Team-up	4	Sgt. Fury	132	Super-villain Team-up	5
Thor	244	Thor	245	Thor	246
Warlock	11	Tomb Of Darkness	19	Warlock	12
X-Men	97	Werewolf By Night	37	X-Men	98

THOSE WERE THE DAYS, BY CROM!

REMINISCING: THE THOMAS/SMITH CONAN APPRAISED BY HUNTER TREMAYNE

The first Conan I ever saw was issue five, "Zukala's Daughter" by Roy Thomas, Barry Smith and Frank Giacoia. Looking back, it's hard to put a finger on the exact reason I bought it; it certainly wasn't the cover, anyway, for my fave rave at that time was GL/GA, and a long-haired barbarian waving a dagger certainly wasn't my cup of tea, pseudo-political rebel that I was!

I bought it, however, for the rip-off price of 5p, and, by the end of the week, amazingly had read and re-read it until I knew that poem by heart! The sheer pleasure of that first issue still permeates the pages whenever I re-read it, which is often.

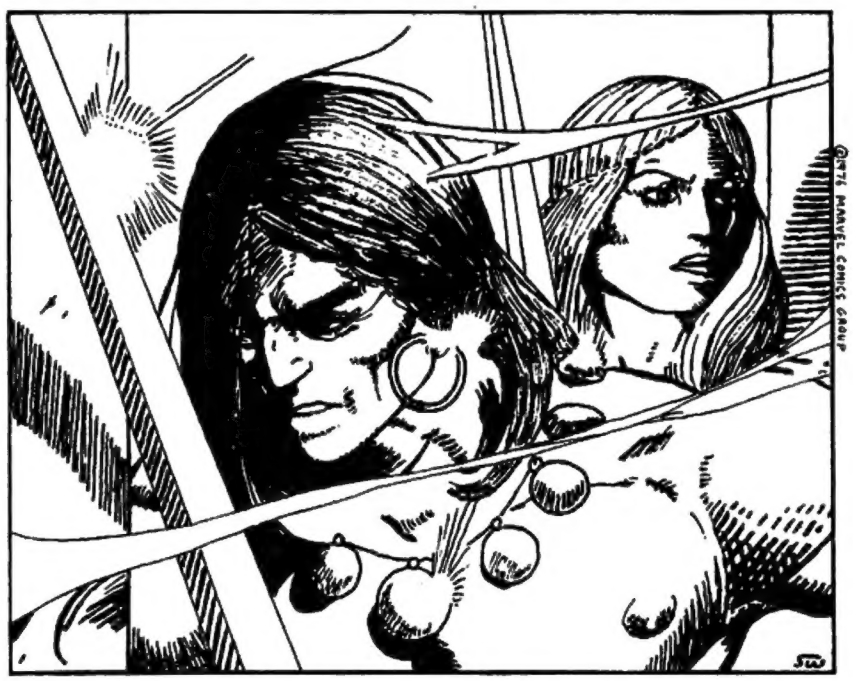
Now, I am a great fan of the Buscema Conan, and indeed am of the opinion that that artist does a more than excellent job, and has even the distinction of being the first artist to actually capture the Robert E. Howard Conan--but then I would argue that Roy Thomas is in far greater sympathy with the character than even Conan's creator ever was.

The main reason that the Smith version of Conan eclipses John Buscema's is the sense of wonder; an indefinable feeling that has the reader gasping in awe at almost every corner, and, above all, a certain magic that no other artist has been able to equal, and something that the earthier Buscema all too sadly lacks.

Giant, bejewelled towers; an ape with a human soul buried beneath unhuman eyes; the glittering mountains of gold and jade; a red-tressed she-devil called Son-Ja; a pathetic, but finally magnificent Yag-Kosha. The memory lingers on, even after the story is finally filed away. Does anyone remember the death of the marvelous Fafnir? The duel with Elric? So many highlights, and always the understated, but majestic Thomas prose and narrative to complement and enhance the artwork, reaching its culmination in "Red Nails", a marvelous conglomeration of story and illustration that stands as their finest hour, and in the Conan treasury edition blasts all sword and sorcery competition out of sight.

But all things must pass, and with Smith missing deadline after deadline, and the top brass clamoring for a more regular artist, after a final colour story "The Song of Red Sonja", Smith left, moving away to a more lucrative, although hardly as satisfying, line of work -- selling Conan-style artwork, plus a few covers for paperback Kung Fu novels.

It's interesting to note that, when Smith made his first leave-taking, he drew Conan looking back over his shoulder at the reader, and saying farewell to Zukala in an unabashed wave of sentiment; lovely dialogue by Thomas, incidentally! However, at the end of issue 24 Conan is not left waving goodbye, but merely muttering to himself as he makes his way back to the barracks. It's almost as if in the first instance Smith feels apologetic, and in the second has decided, perhaps rightly, that he doesn't need to apologise; he has done his best, there it is, like it or lump it.



Now Conan has since gone from strength to strength, with almost every prestige artist itching to 'have a go'. But the credibility of such attempts does tend to jar a little, for they all seem to be using the opportunity as some means of boosting their egos; it seems soulless, and almost clinical in execution.

Re-reading all my Conan comics brings quite an extraordinary sense of loss, a remarkable achievement, for none of them are beyond five years old! In particular, my favourite issue; #15, with a depth of understanding of the barbarian's ideals exemplified in the final two pages--an understanding so blatant by its absence in any of the Carter/deCamp writings.

Some people will disagree with me, but here I must say that, in my not-so-humble opinion, the issues of Conan the Barbarian and Savage Tales starring Conan by Thomas and Smith rank alongside anything ever done in comics. That is to say, if there <u>is</u> anything that can be compared with them, which is doubtful. If you happen to know anything it does compare with, please let me know--but I won't believe you.

And so I leave you with a word from Conan #15; the last word on the last page, it's a simple "Farewell", and that's something even a wild-maned, base-born Cimmerian can appreciate!